

WHERE WE STAND

A look at the Ventura Police Department's Use of Force Policies



1. BAN CHOKE HOLDS & STRANGLE HOLDS

VPD policy does not authorize the use of a choke hold, strangle hold, or the carotid restraint, except in situations where the use of deadly force is allowed by law.

Our policy complies with Government Code 7286.5, which prohibits police agencies from authorizing the use of the carotid restraint or the choke hold.



2. REQUIRE DE-ESCALATION

De-escalation is required and/or recommended in several areas of our policy manual.

Our use of force policy dictates that we may use only the amount of force that reasonably appears necessary. If a subject becomes compliant or the situation changes, the reasonable amount of force may diminish and that would require an officer to immediately de-escalate. Our policy also encourages officers to consider de-escalating, disengaging, and even walking away from certain volatile situations as long as there is no danger to the public. (Policies 300.4, 308.8, 309.9, 414 and 418.4)



3. REQUIRE WARNING BEFORE SHOOTING

VPD policy requires an officer to give a verbal warning preceding the use of deadly force whenever feasible. Such a warning is not always feasible when faced with a dynamic situation. (Policy 300.4)

4. USE ONLY THE APPROPRIATE LEVEL OF FORCE

At VPD, we are committed to the sanctity of life for all persons. Our policy requires officers to use only the amount of force that reasonably appears necessary in any given situation.

Sometimes exhausting all other means is not possible. If an officer is faced with an imminent threat of death or serious bodily injury, the officer may not have time to attempt and exhaust lower levels of force. Example: If an officer was being assaulted with deadly force, it would not be feasible to first exhaust the use of verbal commands, control holds, a Taser, a baton, or any other level of force. Our officers are trained to go immediately to the most appropriate level of force. (Policy 300.3)



5. DUTY TO INTERVENE

VPD policy explicitly requires officers to intervene when they observe another officer using force beyond what is objectively reasonable. The intervening officer must also promptly report their observations to a supervisor. (Policy 300.2.1)

“The Ventura Police Department is committed to the protection of life and property by providing the highest quality service through community involvement and problem solving.

- Ventura Police
Mission Statement



6. DISCOURAGE SHOOTING AT MOVING VEHICLES

VPD policy discourages shooting at or from moving vehicles and requires officers to move out of the path of an approaching vehicle rather than shooting at it, when feasible.

The policy does allow officers to shoot at a moving vehicle, but only when the officer believes there are no other reasonable means available to avert the threat of the vehicle, or if deadly force other than the vehicle is directed at the officer or others. (Policy 300.4.1)

7.

REQUIRE THE SELECTION OF APPROPRIATE FORCE

VPD's arrest control tactics program teaches a use of force paradigm rather than a continuum.

The use of force continuum model is outdated and has proven impractical, even dangerous, when applied in real life situations. A continuum implies that an officer must exhaust all lower level force options prior to using higher levels of force. A paradigm allows an officer to immediately choose the most appropriate level of force, based on the situation, while following policy, which dictates we use only the amount of force that reasonably appears necessary.



8. REQUIRE COMPREHENSIVE REPORTING

VPD policy requires that officers document all uses of force promptly, completely, and accurately.

These reports are approved by a supervisor and then all use of force incidents are scrutinized by a Tactical Review Committee. Additionally, our patrol officers are required to wear body worn cameras and activate them whenever enforcement action is anticipated. (Policy 300.5)



Our department policy is available online at: <https://www.cityofventura.ca.gov/1789/VPDPolicy>

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1425 Dowell Drive, Ventura, CA, 93003

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